

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

Groundwater Discharge Permitting Guidance Document for
Recharging Aquifers with Reclaimed Wastewater
WD-05-31

February 2006

Water Supply Engineering Bureau
Groundwater and Drinking Water Source Protection Program



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has developed this guidance document to describe how the use of reclaimed water from wastewater treatment plants is regulated in New Hampshire. For this document, the use of reclaimed wastewater has been limited to discharges to the land surface to: 1) recharge aquifers; or 2) irrigate turf at golf courses. Specifically, this document provides guidance for developing new groundwater discharges associated with the following forms of wastewater land treatment and/or disposal methods:

- 1) Rapid Infiltration (RI) systems.
- 2) Slow Rate infiltration (SR) systems.
- 3) Spray irrigation of turf at golf courses.

Rapid infiltration achieves treatment and disposal by rapid infiltration of primary or secondary effluent into alternately dosed shallow basins over highly permeable soil. (Primary effluent quality is attainable by primary treatment or simple settling. Secondary effluent quality is attainable by secondary treatment, which follows primary treatment and contains a biological treatment component.) Slow rate infiltration systems achieve treatment and disposal by slow rate application of primary or secondary effluent (i.e., typically spray irrigation) onto moderately permeable cultivated or forested land. Similarly, spray irrigation at golf courses achieves treatment and disposal by applying treated wastewater as spray irrigation to turf where the wastewater is evaporated, transpired, or recharged into aquifers.

A groundwater discharge permit issued by DES is the primary mechanism regulating wastewater reclamation activities in New Hampshire. It is DES' intent that this guidance be used to achieve compliance with the requirements contained in Env-Ws 1500 to obtain a groundwater discharge permit, although the applicant should be aware that additional laws and regulations apply. In addition to this guidance document, other documents are available and can be used as resources for developing a wastewater reclamation project. These documents include:

TR-16: Guides for the Design of Wastewater Treatment Works – 1998 Edition. New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission.

Process Design Manual: Land Treatment of Municipal Wastewater. United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA 625/1-81-013).

Process Design Manual: Land Treatment of Municipal Wastewater – Supplement on Rapid Infiltration and Overland Flow. United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA 625/1-81-013a).

Guidelines for Water Reuse – 2004. United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA EPA/625/R-04/108) www.epa.gov/ORD/NRMRL/pubs/625r04108/625r04108.pdf.

2.0 LAWS AND REGULATIONS

There are several laws and regulations implemented by federal, state and local governmental agencies that pertain to developing sites to receive reclaimed wastewater. This section summarizes the major regulatory programs with jurisdiction over the types of wastewater reclamation projects described in this document. Copies of the laws and regulations referenced below may be obtained as follows:

- (1) State Laws and Regulations - Visit DES' website at www.des.state.nh.us or telephone (603) 271-2975 or 8876.
- (2) Local Bylaws, Ordinances and Regulations - Contact the town clerk at the town hall for the municipality in which the facility is to be located.
- (3) Federal Laws and Regulations - Visit the Federal Bookstore website at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov> or telephone (866) 512-1800.

2.1 State

The primary statutory authority for regulation of wastewater treatment and disposal facilities is contained in the New Hampshire State Law – RSA 485-A: Water Pollution and Waste Disposal. This law requires DES to develop regulations pertaining to the siting and operation of wastewater treatment and disposal facilities. This law also requires DES to maintain regulations for discharging wastewater to the groundwater to ensure any disposal activity does not make groundwater undrinkable beyond a designated “groundwater discharge zone.” (A groundwater discharge zone is defined as the subsurface volume in which groundwater contamination associated with the discharge of domestic wastewater is contained.)

DES has adopted regulations to implement the requirements of RSA 485-A. The regulations and their purpose are described below.

Env-Ws 700 - Standards of Design and Construction for Sewerage and Wastewater Treatment Facilities

DES' Wastewater Engineering Bureau (WWEB), Design Review Section, has the responsibility of reviewing plans and specifications for all public and private wastewater collection systems and domestic sewage treatment systems. The WWEB also reviews and issues permits for major new users of municipal treatment plants, assists small communities with wastewater treatment needs and prepares environmental assessments for projects that are funded by the State Revolving Loan Fund. Additional functions of the Design Review Section include reviewing wastewater planning studies, municipal sewer use ordinances, user charge systems and inter-municipal agreements. In accordance with state law, the WWEB has developed regulations (Env-Ws 700) that pertain to the location, design, construction, and maintenance of new wastewater facilities.

Env-Ws 901 - Certification of Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators

The WWEB maintains a certification program for wastewater treatment plant operators. Operators of wastewater treatment plants must have the proper level of certification for a given type of treatment process. The WWEB has developed regulations (Env-Ws 901) that specify the certification requirements for operating wastewater treatment plants.

Env-Ws 1500 - Groundwater Discharge Permit and Registration

DES' Water Supply Engineering Bureau (WSEB) maintains a groundwater discharge permit program that specifies procedures applicable to the management and disposal of pollutants. DES has adopted regulations (Env-Ws 1500) that identify requirements for obtaining a groundwater discharge permit including: 1) minimum water quality applicable to the various waters of the state; 2) mechanisms to establish and manage discharges within designated groundwater discharge zones; and 3) requirements for

dischargers to establish groundwater and surface water monitoring, sampling, record keeping and reporting procedures.

Each groundwater discharge permit also contains monitoring and reporting requirements to verify compliance with permit limitations and conditions. Detailed plans for a groundwater monitoring well network must be submitted to DES as part of a complete permit application. The plans must specify the type of wells, their locations, depth, screen selection and method of construction, development and sampling. The applicant must also submit, for review and approval by the program, detailed plans and specifications for all new collection, treatment, and disposal facilities.

An applicant must submit sufficient engineering and hydrogeologic information to explain the potential public health and environmental impacts of the proposed project to DES. The information must demonstrate that all groundwater contamination associated with a groundwater discharge is contained within a “groundwater discharge zone” that is owned or legally controlled by the applicant. After receiving sufficient information, DES will either: 1) issue a groundwater discharge permit possibly with conditions; 2) deny the discharge permit application; or 3) request additional information.

Env-Ws 1600 Septage Management

DES' Residuals Management Section (RMS) maintains a permit system that specifies procedures applicable to the management and disposal of septage. DES has established regulations (Env-Ws 1600) that identify requirements for obtaining a permit to allow either land application (Site Permit), or processing/disposal (Facility Permit) at a location other than a municipal treatment plant operating under a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

Depending on the specific design of a facility, conditions may warrant incorporation of groundwater discharge monitoring within the terms and conditions of the Facility Permit. Though a separate application for a groundwater discharge permit is not required when applying for a Facility Permit, the same data required of an applicant for a groundwater discharge permit will be required of a Facility Permit applicant.

2.2 Local

DES has primary regulatory authority for developing new wastewater treatment and disposal facilities. However, local ordinances and zoning may restrict the type of activities allowed at a private wastewater treatment and disposal facility.

Municipalities must be notified when a complete application for a groundwater discharge permit has been submitted to DES. Notification requirements shall be met by providing a copy of a completed permit application to the town/city clerk of the municipality in which the facility is to be located.

2.3 Federal

The Underground Water Source Protection Program, also known as the Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program, is a federal program designed to protect underground sources of drinking water from pollution. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) pursuant to the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C.A §§300f to 300j-26, administers this program. The EPA divides injection practices into five classes. Class I includes deep disposal wells for industrial and municipal waste. Class II covers all injection wells related to oil and gas production including wells used to store hydrocarbons, which are liquid at standard temperature and pressure. Class III includes wells, which inject liquids for the in situ extraction of minerals or energy. Class IV includes the injection of hazardous and high level

radioactive wastes into and above usable groundwater. Class V covers all other injection wells including those used to discharge treated sewage.

In New Hampshire, the EPA has delegated the UIC Program to DES. DES has developed regulations (Env-Ws 384) to implement the state's UIC Program in accordance with federal requirements. For purposes of the UIC Program, a well is defined as a "bored, drilled, or driven shaft, a dug hole, or seepage pit whose depth is greater than the largest surface dimension; or, an improved sinkhole; or, a soil absorption system."

3.0 FILING FOR A GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE PERMIT

Any wastewater facility that discharges 20,000 gallons per day or greater to groundwater and/or the ground surface must possess a valid groundwater discharge permit issued by DES in accordance with Env-Ws 1500. Once issued, permits are valid for a period of up to five years, unless modified or revoked by DES. An application for a permit renewal must be submitted 90 days prior to the expiration date of the permit. Additionally, new or modified wastewater treatment facilities must obtain separate approval from DES and comply with the requirements of Env-Ws 700. Information on compliance with the requirements of Env-Ws 700 can be found at www.des.state.nh.us/ww/.

Groundwater discharge permit applications must include hydrogeologic studies of the proposed disposal site, its surroundings, and a surface water and groundwater monitoring plan. Applications are reviewed by DES to verify compliance with the requirements of Env-Ws 1500. DES' review consists of two parts. First, an administrative review will be completed to insure proper rules have been followed and the permit fee paid (when applicable). Then technical reviews will be completed to evaluate the technical submittals (plans and specifications, hydrogeologic studies, surface water and groundwater water monitoring plans, ownership documentation, if required). If, during either review, deficiencies are noted in the application, DES will send written notice to the applicant defining such deficiencies. If compliance with Env-Ws 1500 is demonstrated, a permit will be issued within 90 days. Issued discharge permits will contain effluent discharge limitations, surface water and groundwater monitoring requirements and operational conditions. Permits also contain requirements for the regular monitoring of groundwater quality up gradient and down gradient of the proposed discharge in approved monitoring wells.

Applicants proposing to apply reclaimed wastewater to the land surface to recharge aquifers or to golf course turf must submit the basic information described below as part of the groundwater discharge permit application. In addition to the information required below, the applicant must demonstrate compliance with the criteria stated in Section 4.0 for the specific discharge method.

Although DES only requires that an application for a groundwater discharge permit be submitted in accordance with the requirements of Sections 3.0 and 4.0 of this document and Env-Ws 1500, it strongly recommends that applicants submit a proposed scope of work for review and approval prior to initiating work on the application and completing field testing. This will allow all parties to more clearly identify data needs on a site-by-site basis upfront, before work initiates, which may make the permitting process more time and cost efficient.

3.1 Basic Information

Each groundwater discharge permit application for discharging reclaimed wastewater must contain the following basic information:

- (1) The facility name, address, property deed reference by county, book and page, property tax map and lot number.

- (2) The facility owner's name, mailing address, and telephone number.
- (3) The property owner's name, if different then facility owner, mailing address, and telephone number.
- (4) The facility operator's name, if different then facility owner, mailing address, and telephone number.
- (5) The contact person's name, mailing address, and telephone number.
- (6) An original or color photocopy of a United States Geological Survey (USGS) map, 7-1/2 minute series, which clearly identifies the facility location.
- (7) Written verification from the Department of Resource and Economic Development that threatened or endangered species do not exist on the site.
- (8) A copy of the permit, or application if permit not yet issued, for DES approval of a site specific permit under RSA 485-A:17 if applicable, for drainage and erosion control measures.
- (9) A copy of the permit, or application if a permit has not yet been issued, for the septage or sludge management permit pursuant to Env-Ws 800 or Env-Ws 1600, if applicable.
- (10) A copy or status of DES' dam permit, if applicable, for bermed or dammed structures.
- (11) A copy or status of DES' wastewater treatment plant operator permit, as required under Env-Ws 901, if applicable.
- (12) An estimate of the construction time and the projected start-up date.
- (13) All pertinent data concerning relevant local, state and federal permits, approvals, orders of conditions and variances.
- (14) A list of reports on land use history, activities, water quality, and hydrogeology associated with the property on which the facility is located.

3.2 Inventory of Abutters and Potential Receptors

Each groundwater discharge permit application utilizing reclaimed wastewater must describe the abutters and potential receptors in the vicinity of the proposed facility. This information should be provided both on maps with an appropriate scale and in a written and/or tabular format. Specifically, the following information must be provided:

- (1) Any streets within 1,000 feet of the proposed groundwater discharge zone.
- (2) Any properties, including tax map and lot number, ownership and land use information, within 1,000 feet of the proposed groundwater discharge zone.
- (3) Any surface waters or flood zones within 1,000 feet of the proposed groundwater discharge zone including their designated river classification, in accordance with RSA 483, New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program, if applicable.
- (4) Any private or public water supply sources, including type of use, within one half mile of the proposed groundwater discharge zone.

- (5) Any wastewater disposal systems, which are within one half mile of the proposed groundwater discharge zone.
- (6) Any public utilities which are within one half mile of the proposed groundwater discharge zone.
- (7) Any source water protection areas (or wellhead protection areas) for any community, transient, or noncommunity, non-transient public water supply as defined by RSA 485:1-Aa, within one half mile of the groundwater discharge zone.
- (8) Residences or developed areas within one half mile of wastewater storage and disposal areas.
- (9) Land uses and vegetative coverages within one half mile of the wastewater storage and disposal areas.

3.3 Hydrologic Study

Each groundwater discharge permit application must contain the following information based on a hydrologic study:

- (1) A description and map of existing and proposed site topography, existing and proposed site drainage, and proposed retention/recapture zones.
- (2) A site geologic description including a description of surficial geologic materials, estimates of hydraulic conductivity, hydraulic gradients, and seepage velocity using published surficial geology maps, published soil survey maps, or maps prepared by a Certified Soil Scientist or Professional Geologist.
- (3) The location of bedrock known to be at or near the ground surface within 1,000 feet of the groundwater discharge zone.
- (4) Boring log data including:
 - a. Soil sample descriptions according either the document titled, "Standard Classification of Soils for Engineering Purposes, Unified Soil Classification System," American Society for Testing and Materials, Designation: D2487, approved June 29, 1990, and published August 1990, updated 1993; or "Standard Practice for Description and Identification of Soils, Visual Manual Procedure," American Society for Testing and Materials Designation: D2488, approved June 29, 1990, and published August 1990, updated 1993.
 - b. Drilling methods.
 - c. "N-values" according to "Penetration Test and Split Barrel Sampling of Soil," American Society for Testing and Materials Designation: D1586, approved October 15, 1992.
- (5) Well construction details of existing and proposed groundwater monitoring wells including the elevation of the top of well casings, soil boring information, Standard Penetration Test results and measured depth to the water table from the top of casing. Monitoring wells must be installed and maintained in accordance with the New Hampshire Water Well Board Administrative Rules We 602.13. It is recommended that monitoring wells be constructed with 15-foot screens installed approximately 5 feet above and 10 feet below the adjusted high groundwater level. Well construction may be modified based upon specific site conditions such as suspected seasonal high

water level fluctuations. Wells must be able to be secured and constructed so as not to allow infiltration of surface water.

- (6) Soil horizon and soil profile data obtained by test pits excavated throughout the proposed disposal area. One test pit must be excavated per each 500 square feet of disposal area, with a minimum of two per proposed contiguous disposal area. Test pits shall be excavated at the furthest boundaries of the proposed disposal area. If the soil profile is consistent across the proposed disposal area, then the number of test pits may be reduced to one per 1,000 square feet, with a minimum of four test pits. The following test pit data must be provided:
 - a. Verify depth, type, and texture of soil based on field observations recorded in test pit logs. If bedrock rock is encountered, field personnel shall describe observations to characterize the bedrock surface such as but not limited to the degree of weathering, fracturing, and type of rock. Field personnel shall note if redoxymorphic (mottling) features (evidence of seasonal water table or seasonal saturation) or water appear to be at or near this surface at the time of observation.
 - b. Identify distinct soil layers.
 - c. Identify grain size.
 - d. Determine field-based soil permeability results.
 - e. Determine chemical soil properties such as pH, nutrient levels, and cation exchange capacity.
 - f. Determine root zone storage capacity.
- (7) A groundwater conditions evaluation, which must include the following:
 - a. Depth to groundwater confirmed by field investigations (i.e., piezometers or backhoe test pits) for various seasons, including data from the period of March through May.
 - b. Location of perched water tables.
 - c. Groundwater contours.
 - d. Direction of groundwater movement and flow.
 - e. Location of groundwater seeps or discharges.
- (8) An estimation of hydraulic conductivity and infiltration rate for the site. Basin loading tests, double ring infiltrometer tests, and permeameter tests may be conducted, as applicable, in accordance with certified testing methods. Basin loading tests shall be required where rapid infiltration is the proposed disposal method.
- (9) An estimation of the seasonal high groundwater table utilizing redoxymorphic features when applicable, or published observation or monitoring well data according to the methodology set forth in the following publications: Frimpter, M.H. 1981, Probable High Ground-Water Levels in Massachusetts; U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Investigations Open File Report 80-1205. Frimpter, M.H. and Fisher, M.N, 1983, Estimating Highest Ground-Water Levels for Construction and Land Use Planning – A Cape Cod Massachusetts Example; U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Investigation Report 83-4112.
- (10) A table summarizing all groundwater and surface water monitoring results to date.

- (11) Nitrate, phosphorous or contaminant movement study (if applicable). No discharge may cause nitrate in a public water supply well to exceed 5 mg/l, or result in a surface water quality violation in accordance with Env-Ws 1700.
- (12) Ambient water quality of the site (groundwater and if present, nearby surface water). Sampling points for monitoring ambient water quality must be provided.
- (13) A consideration of the added effects of natural precipitation as it relates to soil saturation, and seasonal changes affecting both soil and groundwater characteristics. This analysis must include, at a minimum:
 - a. Evaluate yearly rainfall, seasonal rainfall variations, and total precipitation for each month (use the wettest year in the past ten).
 - b. Determine the mean number of days per year with temperatures less than or equal to 32°F (0°C).
 - c. Determine mean wind velocities and prevailing direction.
 - d. Determine potential water loss through evapotranspiration.
 - e. Evaluate plant growing seasons and periods of highest nutrient/water uptake.
- (14) An analysis of the ability of the site to accept and disperse flow at the proposed maximum monthly flow rate for 90 days.
- (15) An evaluation of the potential for groundwater mounding, the presence of confining layers, and unsaturated receiving material thickness and estimated aerial extent. Mounding calculations or modeling must be evaluated for maximum monthly flow for a period of 90 days. The evaluation must include (if applicable) the effect of impermeable or semi-permeable barriers within the potential groundwater mound. These would include but not be limited to foundations and retaining walls. Characterization of difference between the mounding material and the native material must be done to account for difference in infiltration rate and preferential flow direction.
- (16) A proposal for an appropriate groundwater monitoring well network based upon known or inferred groundwater flow direction under various seasonal conditions and geology (must include both up gradient, cross gradient, and down gradient locations). The exact number of monitoring points should be based upon site complexity, proximity to sensitive areas, or design of the system.
- (17) A proposal for a water level and water quality monitoring program. The program must include a sampling plan for both wastewater and monitoring wells installed within the groundwater discharge zone. The sampling plan must also include any nearby surface water bodies. The purpose of the sampling plan is to ensure that the discharge of wastewater will not cause water quality standards to be violated outside of the groundwater discharge zone immediately, or over time. A water level monitoring plan must be maintained to: 1) Ensure the land application of wastewater does not exceed design standards specified in Section 4.0; and 2) Verify the extent of mounding and the direction of seasonal groundwater flow and velocity under discharging conditions.
- (18) An evaluation of likely impacts on current and potential down gradient and cross gradient receptors as identified in Section 3.2.
- (19) If within a source water protection area (or wellhead protection area), an evaluation of the time of travel from discharge to the source of supply. Recharged wastewater must have a travel time of two

years or more to any public water supply well or intake, unless enhanced treatment process or controls combined with other natural hydrologic influences justify an allowance of a shorter travel time.

- (20) Delineation of a groundwater discharge zone in which all contamination associated with the discharge will be contained.
- (21) Demonstration with the facility design and siting parameters described in Section 4.0.
 - a. For rapid infiltration, demonstration with the design parameters specified in Section 4.1.
 - b. For slow rate application, demonstration with the design parameters specified in Section 4.2.
 - c. For spray irrigation of golf course turf, demonstration with the design parameters specified in Section 4.3.

3.4 Final Hydrologic Design and Operational Parameters

Each groundwater discharge permit application utilizing reclaimed wastewater must contain the following information describing operational parameters of the proposed facility:

- (1) A complete description of the facility, its intended capacity, and type of wastewater that will be discharged. Supporting information describing the process involved in the pretreatment, treatment, storage, or disposal of wastes should be included in the description.
- (2) A detailed description of the wastewater to be discharged, including:
 - a. Discharge characteristics, including calculations and analytical results if available.
 - b. Volume of discharge.
 - c. Hydraulic loading rates (including seasonal, peak, and monthly averages).
- (3) Proposed discharge schedule.
- (4) Location and number of discharge points.
- (5) A detailed proposal for a groundwater and surface water quality monitoring program, including proposed monitoring schedule, parameters to be analyzed, and monitoring locations with supporting information justifying the locations, frequency, and parameters selected.
- (6) Status of DES' approval of design plans and operations and maintenance manuals for the wastewater treatment system in accordance with Env-Ws 700.

3.5 Standard Site Control Measures

Each groundwater discharge permit application utilizing reclaimed wastewater must contain the following information demonstrating that adequate site control measures are in place:

- (1) A groundwater discharge zone map, using a tax map as a base, which identifies and locates, to the extent ascertainable, the following:

- a. A groundwater discharge zone boundary.
 - b. Any deeded easements, which restrict the use of the groundwater within the zone.
- (2) Proof of ownership of the groundwater discharge zone including documentation filed in the registry of deeds, which acknowledges that easement ownership rights have been obtained to restrict the use of water wells within the groundwater discharge zone.

3.6 Facility Plan

Each groundwater discharge permit application utilizing reclaimed wastewater must contain a facility plan prepared in accordance with the following:

- (1) The plan shall include a title, a legend, and a true north arrow.
- (2) The plan shall be drawn to scale and the scale shall be noted on the plan and include a graphic scale bar.
- (3) The base plan sources from which the facility plan was derived shall be noted on the plan.
- (4) The location, elevation, and datum of a bench mark shall be included, but if a bench mark referenced to National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) is within 1,000 feet of the facility, elevation shall be recorded using NGVD and the source of the NGVD bench mark information shall be noted on the plan.
- (5) The plan shall identify and locate, to the extent ascertainable, the following:
 - a. Existing and proposed groundwater monitoring wells that will be monitored.
 - b. Surface water sampling points.
 - c. Groundwater contours which show groundwater flow direction within 100 feet of the groundwater discharge zone.
 - d. Surface waters within 1,000 feet of the groundwater discharge zone.
 - e. Areas where deeded easements restrict the use of groundwater.
 - f. A groundwater discharge zone boundary.
 - g. Land surface contours within 100 feet of the groundwater discharge zone.
 - h. Piezometers used to develop groundwater contours and/or monitor groundwater mounding.
 - i. Table of water level measurements and elevations found in piezometers and monitoring wells used to develop the groundwater contours.
 - j. Soil borings and test pits within 1,000 feet of the groundwater discharge zone.
 - k. Physical structures and buildings associated with facility.

- l. Surface and underground storage tanks associated with the facility.
- m. Underground utilities at the facility.
- n. Subsurface drains at the facility.

4.0 DESIGN CRITERIA FOR WASTEWATER LAND TREATMENT AND/OR DISPOSAL METHODS

Final effluent disposal to the land or subsurface must be by means of properly designed facilities. This section provides general guidelines for developing land treatment facilities that use the following disposal methods for treated wastewater:

- 1) Rapid Infiltration (RI) systems.
- 2) Slow Rate infiltration (SR) systems.
- 3) Spray irrigation of turf at golf courses.

Other methods of discharge may be allowed on a case-by-case basis provided adequate documentation is presented to DES, which demonstrates the estimated impact on the environment and hazard to public health resulting from such alternate system. This documentation shall include either results of a properly monitored pilot test performed with Departmental approval at the proposed discharge site or the results of tests and/or actual experience at other similar locations. It may be necessary to develop a reserve area to dispose of wastewater in the event the facility main disposal area cannot be operated.

Below, some basic facility siting and design guidelines are provide for various wastewater land treatment and disposal methods. Note that these guidelines supplement the standard information required for all new groundwater discharge permit applications associated with wastewater land treatment and disposal that are listed in Section 3.0 of this document.

4.1. Rapid Infiltration (RI) Systems

RI systems achieve treatment and disposal by rapid infiltration of primary or secondary effluent into alternately dosed shallow basins over highly permeable soil. RI systems provide treatment as wastewater percolates through the soil. RI systems require a minimum of primary treatment although secondary treatment has often been provided at existing facilities. When RI basins follow aerated lagoons, filtration for algae control is sometimes necessary to prevent surface clogging. Soil permeability is most often the factor limiting the application rate but a particular constituent in the wastewater may also limit the application rate. Very little of the applied wastewater will be lost to evaporation. RI systems typically achieve a high level of treatment.

Hydraulic Loading Rate

The design average annual hydraulic loading rate for rapid infiltration should be calculated as follows:

$$L_w = I \times (24 \text{ hr/day}) \times N \times f$$

Where:

- L_w = annual design loading rate, in inches per year
- I = measured infiltration rate, in inches per hour
- N = number of operating days per year, in days per year
- f = design application factor expressed as a decimal that ranges from 2 to 15 percent of the measured infiltration rate depending on type of infiltration test conducted

Drying periods are required for RI systems to allow the soil to aerate and recover between application periods. Because wastewater application is not continuous, the actual wastewater application rate is greater than the annual design loading rate. The actual application rate is calculated according to the following formula:

$$RA = \frac{L_w \times \text{operating cycle in days}}{365 \times \text{application period in days}}$$

Where:

- RA = actual application rate in inches per day
- L_w = average annual design loading rate, in inches per year

Typical RI system design loading rates vary from 50 to 400 feet per year. Basin bottom area requirements for rapid infiltration are calculated from the following formula:

$$A = \frac{Q \text{ (gal/day)} \times 365 \text{ day/yr}}{(0.083 \text{ ft/in.}) \times L_w \text{ (in./yr)} \times 7.48 \text{ gal/ft}^3 \times 43,560 \text{ ft}^2/\text{acre}}$$

Where:

- A = basin bottom area in acres
- Q = wastewater flow in gallons per day
- L_w = average annual design loading rate in inches per year

This formula is applicable if flow equalization or storage is available. When equalization is not available, the daily wastewater flow should be adjusted to provide for the highest flow rate anticipated on a weekly, monthly, or seasonal basis. Additional basins may be provided to accommodate periods of high flow. RI basins can operate on a year-round basis therefore storage may not be necessary. However, it has been found useful to dose the basins with a large flow from storage, particularly when daily flows are small. Small continuous flows are more susceptible to freezing than a large dose of warmer wastewater. For winter operation, the formation of an ice cover is encouraged, as each dose of wastewater should float the ice to allow infiltration to occur under the ice surface. Storage may also be needed if soil permeability is relatively low and the water drains so slowly that freezing occurs.

Site Investigation

Special emphasis should be placed on site geology and field verification of soil characteristics when developing RI basins. RI basins generally require deep, permeable soils with percolation rates of one inch per hour or more. A complete hydrogeologic evaluation must be completed to predict the range of the effluent plume and the point of breakout. Site investigations must include depth of soil to groundwater or bedrock, topography, and groundwater movement. Depth to groundwater and bedrock at several locations during the field investigation must be determined. Test pits and permeability tests must determine the location and infiltration rate of the most restrictive soil layer in the basin. Adequate test pits and monitoring wells must be constructed to define the movement of groundwater. Soil conditions beyond the RI basin site must be verified to ensure that percolate will flow away from the site.

Measurements of infiltration rates using flooding basin tests should be conducted whenever possible, and must be conducted when rapid infiltration is the only method for disposing of wastewater. Alternative methods of measuring can overestimate the infiltration rate. Depending on the soil type, application rates may vary from 4 to 120 inches per week. The minimum distance from the application surface to groundwater or an impervious layer should be 10 feet prior to application. A groundwater mounding analysis should be performed to estimate the vertical and horizontal extent of the effluent plume. After application, mounding should be no closer than 2 feet to the basin bottom. The design should include multiple dosing basins to avoid overdosing individual basins. Allow sufficient drying time between doses on individual basins. At the very least, the surface of the basin should be dry prior to the next dosing. Chemical analysis of the soil is recommended to determine if the accumulation of phosphorus or nitrogen in the soil may limit design. A complete background sampling and analysis of groundwater is also recommended. Site management should ensure long-term treatment by controlling the hydraulic and nitrogen loading rates.

Treatment Performance

RI systems can remove relatively high levels of BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) and TSS (total suspended solids) through filtration, soil adsorption, and bacterial decomposition. Nitrogen removal does not always occur, but removals from 40 to 90 percent have been reported at some sites. Nitrogen removal is a function of biological denitrification and occurs through modified operating procedures that ensure an anoxic period. Denitrification is affected by the BOD-to-nitrogen ratio (optimally 3:1), hydraulic loading rate, and the ratio of flooding time to resting time (basin rest periods may range from 5 to 20 days). Phosphorus removal occurs from soil adsorption and chemical precipitation. Detention time in the percolate zone in relation to the proximity of monitoring wells must be estimated. Short-circuits may occur, yielding false high phosphorus content in the groundwater. Nitrogen and phosphorus may be limiting factors at a given RI site, particularly if the existing groundwater aquifer approaches or exceeds state drinking water limits.

Maintenance Requirements

Periodic cutting should be conducted to control vegetation on basin slopes and bottom areas. Cuttings should be removed. Exterior basin slopes and surrounding grounds should be cut regularly to discourage burrowing animals and tree roots from penetrating the basin embankments.

4.2 Slow Rate (SR) Systems

Slow rate systems achieve treatment and disposal by slow rate application of primary or secondary effluent (i.e., typically spray irrigation) onto moderately permeable cultivated or forested land. Special

emphasis should be placed on field verification of soil characteristics when designing SR systems. A certified soil scientist should conduct a high-intensity soil survey when a detailed soil survey is not available. Even when published data are available, field confirmation and refinement of soil properties in the areas to be used is necessary. A hydrogeologic evaluation must be performed to quantify site hydrogeologic capacity based on the soil and groundwater information required by Section 3.0 of this document.

Hydraulic Loading Rate

Soil permeability should be mid-range for spray irrigation. When soils are rapidly permeable, rapid infiltration basins are generally a better treatment choice. Typical soil permeabilities for spray irrigation as a means of effluent disposal are in the range of 0.2 to 2.0 inches per hour and are normally associated with loamy soils. Soil permeability is typically a limiting factor in the design of SR systems. Depending on the soil type, slope, depth to groundwater, and depth to an impermeable layer, application rates may vary from 0.5 to 4.0 inches per week (including precipitation). Vegetation selection directly affects the level of pre-application treatment, type of distribution system, and hydraulic loading rate. The type of vegetative cover will determine the period of expected transpiration and the duration of the application season. Wastewater should not be disposed of using the SR method when:

- More than 0.5 inch of rain fell in previous eight-hour period.
- Frost is in the ground.
- More than one inch of snow is on the ground.
- Cannot land apply on snow if the ground is frozen and a hard crust is on the snow.
- High groundwater limits infiltration of effluent.

Surface runoff from spray sites is not allowed; and wastewater application at spray sites must cease during storm conditions. The wastewater field application area can be calculated using the formula below:

$$A = \frac{Q \times (\text{ft}^3 / 7.48 \text{ gal}) + dV}{L_w \times (\text{ft.} / 12 \text{ in.}) \times (43,560 \text{ ft}^2 / \text{acre})}$$

Where:

- A = field area, in acres
- Q = wastewater flow, in gallons per day
- dV = net loss or gain in stored water volume because of precipitation and/or evaporation, in cubic feet per day
- L_w = design hydraulic loading rate, in inches per day

Hydraulic loading rate must be calculated on a site-specific basis using the water balance equation:

$$L_w = ET - P + W_p$$

Where:

- L_w = wastewater hydraulic loading rate based on soil permeability, in depth per time
- ET = design evapotranspiration rate based on the estimated average evapotranspiration of the crop, in depth per time
- P = design precipitation rate based on total precipitation for the wettest year in a 10 year period, in depth per time
- W_p = design percolation rate as measured in the field, in depth per time

In this formula, the precipitation rate should be the wettest year in the past 10 years. The percolation rate should be based on field measurements. If permeability varies across the site, conservatively determine the average value of permeability based on different soil types. The design percolation rate should not exceed 4 to 10 percent of the minimum soil permeability. Use the lower percentage for poorly defined soil conditions. A water balance should be calculated using the equation above for each of the 12 months of the year to determine the annual loading rate. Consideration must be given to the agronomic rate for the selected vegetative cover at the application site. Typical spray irrigation systems in New England use sprinklers for wastewater application and apply 3.5 to 6.5 feet per year.

Nitrogen may be a limiting factor at a given SR site. If this is the case, percolate nitrogen should be limited to a maximum of 10 mg/L total nitrogen.

Site Investigation

Chemical analysis of the soil is recommended to determine if the accumulation of nitrogen may limit system design. In general, minimum depth to an impervious layer prior to application ranges from one to five feet. The minimum vertical separation from the ground surface to the actual water table during the period of spray application ranges from one to three feet.

Treatment Performance

Slow rate systems can achieve greater than 90 percent BOD^5 (5-day biochemical oxygen demand test) removal from primary effluent, up to 90 percent BOD^5 removal from secondary effluent, nearly complete pathogen reduction, and significant nitrogen and phosphorus reduction. BOD^5 removal is achieved by filtration, soil adsorption, and bacterial oxidation. Phosphorus is removed by soil adsorption and chemical precipitation. Nitrogen is removed through plant uptake, nitrification/denitrification, and storage in the soil. Pathogens are similarly removed in addition to other reductions by radiation and exposure to adverse environmental conditions. Effluent disinfection immediately prior to SR application will ensure pathogen reduction and is required when the potential for human contact exists. Pathogens, particularly viruses, are adsorbed to soil particles in the first 20 inches (0.5 m) under the infiltrative surface. In cool, moist conditions they can remain viable for more than a year, and may desorb under saturated conditions. Therefore seasonal high groundwater cannot inundate the treatment zone even if effluent application is not occurring at the time. High groundwater may not be an issue if the effluent to be applied is pretreated to at least secondary levels and is disinfected immediately prior to application.

4.3 Water Reuse as Irrigation for Golf Courses or Other Landscaping Applications

Proposals to use reclaimed wastewater on golf courses or other landscaping applications are based on a SR system design, however, these proposals must satisfactorily address public health related issues and demonstrate that the permitted treatment plant can successfully achieve and maintain the water quality described in the ambient groundwater quality standards (AGQS). (AGQS as defined in RSA 485-C:2, I, namely "maximum concentration levels for regulated contaminants in groundwater which result from human operations or activities, as delineated in RSA 485-C:6."). A best management practices (BMP) plan must be submitted that demonstrates how operation of the treatment and disposal systems and the facility or land use itself will be managed to minimize exposure to humans and prevent direct contact with reclaimed water. The applicant must also submit a plan to monitor the impacts that the project has on ground and surface water quality and the performance of the land use components that are considered part of the treatment system. For example, if turf on a golf course is meant to remove nitrogen from treated wastewater, the performance of the turf must be demonstrated through sample acquisition below the root layer.

Best Management Practices (BMP)

The implementation of golf course management protocols is an integral part of the goal of minimizing health risks through minimizing exposure to humans. There are a multitude of construction, and operation and maintenance practices that can be employed at golf courses to minimize human exposure. BMPs are considered a “working” part of the overall system approval, as important to minimizing risk through exposures as generating an acceptable effluent and insuring proper treatment train performance. As part of the groundwater discharge permit application process, DES must review and approve a facility management plan that describes in detail the types of BMPs that will be employed at the spray irrigation facility. Depending upon the type of land use, the geologic setting, the sensitivity of local water resource areas and the risk of human exposure, many or all of the following practices/protocols must be employed where spray irrigating reclaimed wastewater:

- Spray irrigating during non-use hours utilizing low trajectory sprayers.
- Public awareness signs indicating use of reclaimed water.
- Nutrient management plan reflecting fertilizer application and nutrients in sprayed wastewater.
- Storage ponds designed for maximizing water quality.
- Provide appropriate cross-connection/backflow preventing devices and the color coding of potable vs. non-potable piping and fixtures.
- Emergency contingency plans and contracts with a spray irrigating system vendor.
- Procedure for immediate switch-over to a non-growing season disposal system.
- No ponding of sprayed water may result.
- Outside plumbing fixtures must have locking caps and be labeled as non-potable water.
- Wind speed measurements must be correlated to spraying practices.
- Appropriate buffers to spray irrigated water must be imposed.

- Education of facility personnel responsible for irrigation practices.

Buffers and Barriers

To reduce the risk of human exposure, the establishment of natural barriers and buffers to eliminate aerosol drift must be undertaken by facilities spray irrigating reclaimed wastewater:

- Areas of the facility receiving sprayed treated effluent must be a minimum of 400 feet from buildings, drinking water wells, Class A surface water bodies and surface water intakes.
- Areas of the facility being sprayed with potable water need not employ barriers or setbacks.
- To further reduce the risk of human exposure, spray irrigation of treated effluent must take place during nonoperational hours.
- There can be no spray irrigation of reclaimed water within 100 feet of any property line, wetland or surface water body.
- Irrigation systems must be designed to avoid any surface ponding, the spraying of paved or impermeable areas or the creation of any surface runoff.
- Irrigation systems should be designed to avoid spraying building and dwellings, decks, garages, driveways and roads.

In some instances, hedges or trees may be used to create barriers and reduce setback requirements. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Treatment

Wastewater reused for irrigation at golf courses must meet more stringent reclaimed water quality standards and collect sample wastewater effluent water quality more frequently because of the potential of human contact with the disposal areas. Effluent used at golf courses must receive secondary treatment, be filtered and be disinfected. Except for certain nutrients discussed below, effluent sprayed onto golf courses must meet ambient groundwater quality standards. Permits that do not impose a drinking water standard for nitrogen, nitrate or phosphorous may be issued to enhance fertilization practices. In order for permits to reflect the allowance of a different nutrient limit for reclaimed water, golf course fertilization practices must include a reduction in artificially applied fertilizer. For example, a golf course that receives reclaimed water with a nitrogen concentration of 30 mg/l from a nearby treatment plant must demonstrate that the number of pounds of nitrogen dissolved in the reclaimed water is taken into account when fertilization plans for the course are considered. There should effectively be a weight for weight reduction in artificially applied fertilizers. This issue must be addressed in the BMP plan.

Storage Ponds

Man-made irrigation ponds designed to store reclaimed water must be designed to minimize biological influences that would adversely affect the quality of the stored water. These design factors include, but are not limited to:

- Lining the pond.

- Pond aeration.
- Promoting pond circulation by properly locating inlet and outlet structures.
- The pond should be sized to allow for frequent recycling of pond water. One pond volume equivalent should be pumped frequently allowing for the addition of fresh reclaimed water and the evacuation of old water.
- Runoff from fertilized areas must be directed away from ponds.

Man-made storage and/or irrigation ponds should be located so that they do not present a physical hazard to the public. Appropriate warning signs should be placed around the pond(s) indicating that direct contact with water and/or sediment could pose a health risk. The perimeter of the pond(s) should be landscaped to impede direct access to the water by exploratory children and youth.

5.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Contact Mitch Locker at 271-xxxx or mlocker@des.state.nh.us or Stephen Roy at 271-3918 or sroy@des.state.nh.us for additional information regarding the use of wastewater to recharge aquifers.